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Carpets in Persia

by R. A. BISHOP

EVEN in Iran, Persian carpets are not cheap, and the carpets on sale in the bazaars and shops for use in the country are better quality than those exported. For a European, a carpet is something to be walked on in shoes, beaten, brushed, Hoovered, kicked about; it must be tough and hard-wearing; it is under-foot, less important than the furniture, chairs and tables in the room. For an Iranian, the carpet is something to be treasured; something expensive; something worth a good deal of attention. Very often it is the only furniture in the room; you take your shoes off to stand on it; you do not walk about but sit down quietly on it. Hence Iranians are prepared to buy high-quality carpets and large ones; they can afford to pay a lot for a single carpet if they are not burdened with the problem of furniture as well. European dealers on the other hand, knowing their market, go for the lower-quality and the smaller pieces. Temporary residents of Iran, thinking to make a profitable deal on the side, have sometimes gone home with a selection of fine carpets at bargain prices, but have been quite unable to find a buyer, simply because the unit price was too high for European pockets and tastes.

There are of course many different kinds of Persian carpets, native, like wines, to the locality in which they are made, distinguishable by connoisseurs for their differences in colour, design and knotting. The characteristic motif of the design of Isfahan carpets is the arabesques copied from the mosaics of the Safavid mosques. These same arabesques are also a feature of the carpets of Nain, a town some eighty miles east of Isfahan on the edge of the central desert, but the Nain carpets are noteworthy for the fineness of the design, often emphasized by being picked out in silk thread, and the predominance of a glowing blue amongst the colours. West of Isfahan is Nejafabad, where Isfahan carpets are also made, but of a more workaday type. However, I did see one on the loom there, with a fine border of running arabesques, of which the design and colouring in brown, reds and greens achieved a successful and unexpected harmony. Isfahan is also the centre for Bakhtiari

tribal rugs, of which there are two main kinds: those made in the settled villages on the fringes of the tribal areas, with a rather heavy, stylized repeated flower or tree pattern; and those made on portable looms by the nomads themselves, often showing a geometric crystalline or 'snowflake' pattern in red and black. We were able to obtain two rather rare pieces, Bakhtiari rugs made of undyed wool, the pattern being formed in white, grey, black and two shades of brown, natural colours of the sheep. The design is that of a garden, with roses, cypresses, vines, oaks, weeping willows and hollyhocks visible in the flower-beds. Although the design is traditional the colour scheme is new, having been evolved by a Bakhtiari *khan* to suit the trend of taste in Europe and America.

The common characteristic of all Persian carpets is that they are hand-woven. The looms are cumbersome frames of heavy timbers arranged so that the long warp threads can be stretched to give the right tension. In the towns and settled areas the looms are vertical; the workers, young girls between the ages of six and eleven, squat on a scaffolding of planks which are raised as the work progresses. Because of the tension and harshness of the warp threads, the little girls' fingers first become raw and bleeding, then calloused, as they insert, twist and knot the weft. To keep them at their work, the ladders are removed once they have climbed up onto their planks, and there they must stay, several feet above the ground, until the overseer allows them to move. It is a curious sensation to enter a carpet workshop, very dark by comparison with the glare outside, and to hear around and above you the continuous murmur and shuffle of children whom at first you cannot see.

For tribal and near-tribal carpets the looms are horizontal, arranged so that they can be transported and set up again without spoiling the carpet. The work is done by all the women, and not only by the young girls. However, because the looms are more insecure and less complicated, the knotting of tribal carpets is not so fine as that of other Persian carpets.

Apart from aesthetic considerations, the



All photographs, except one, by the author

Techniques of carpet making in Persia.
(Left) Isfahan carpets are woven on a vertical loom. The workers, 'girls between the ages of six and eleven, squat on a scaffolding of planks which are raised as the work progresses. To keep them at their work, the ladders are removed once they have climbed up onto their planks, and there they must stay, several feet above the ground, until the overseer allows them to move'.
(Below) A carpet on a vertical loom. Above the man are the planks that the little girls sit on at their work.
(Opposite) Tribal and village carpets are made on horizontal looms, and women of all ages join in the work



quality of a carpet depends on the fineness of the knotting and the complexity and regularity of the design. An average-quality carpet will have some forty knots to the square centimetre, while a tribal carpet will not often have more than twenty. The more knots per square centimetre, the more warp threads there are, and therefore the closer and the finer they must be. The warp threads for a carpet finer than sixty or seventy knots per square centimetre are so close together that they must be of silk, and above a hundred knots per square centimetre both warp and weft must be of silk.

For the very best carpets the design, like that of a model dress, is unique. Carpet designers are specialists with individual reputations, paid high prices for their designs. In order to economize, a carpet-maker may use a design two or three times over, still producing first-quality carpets by ringing the changes on the colour scheme, but even this needs a good deal of care. It may also happen that he will make a pair of rugs to exactly the same design, but these are intended for use together, and special precautions are taken in the workshop to ensure that they are 'identical' twins.

The design is worked out diagrammatically on squared paper, the lines of which reproduce the warp and weft, with the position of each knot and its colour appropriately marked. For the best carpets, on which only the most experienced girls, those who have reached the age of eleven or more, are allowed to work, the knotting is copied directly from the diagram, hung before the weavers' eyes. For carpets of lesser quality, however, the work of three or four girls is directed by one senior girl who indicates the colour and position of the knot in a low-voiced chant to the rhythm of which her team works.

In addition to the special designs there are the traditional designs, memorized and repeated



from carpet to carpet. Even among these, some, the 'one-way' designs, need more skill than others; garden designs, for instance, are intended to be looked at only from the direction of the gate by which the garden is entered. Consequently the weaving is more complicated than the simple repetition of a motif.

Defects are liable to creep into all Persian carpets. Uneven tension causes them to be unrectangular or not to lie flat; inaccurate copying leads to irregularities in the pattern; and poor dyeing or uneven matching results in unwanted colour variations. The theory, commonly held in England, that these defects are a planned feature of Persian carpets is, however, a

fallacy. The discriminating carpet-buyer will look carefully for such imperfections, and the price suffers accordingly if any are found.

Once I came across a workshop in the bazaar that specialized in rectifying defects. Nothing could be done about irregularities in the pattern, but for the others there were appropriate remedies. Carpets with uneven tension were stretched over raised trestles and weighed down with heavy bits of scrap-iron, even in one case the cylinder-block of an engine; unrectangular carpets were tacked down along the edges and pulled into the required shape; carpets in which the warp or the weft had collapsed because of excessive tension were carefully sewn together; carpets with colour variations were painted to look uniform. Workshops of this kind also do *bona fide* repairs to worn or damaged carpets.

Even if major doctoring is not required, after it is taken off the loom a carpet still needs finishing before it is ready for sale. First, the pile is shaved with an implement resembling a safety razor, to make it as thin and even as possible—for an Iranian, the thinner the pile, the finer the carpet, a curious reversal of European tastes; hence the shaving, in an effort to upgrade the carpet. The best carpets are so thin anyway, resembling velvet to the touch, that no shaving is possible. Second, the carpet should undergo a limited amount of hard wear. This has the effect of felting the knots and making the carpet more durable. Finally, the carpet is beaten and washed to get rid of the dirt and dust accumulated during the months and years on the loom. In Isfahan groups of men could be seen daily by the riverside, vigorously beating carpets, dragging them into the water, stamping backwards and forwards on them to squeeze out the dirt, and then loading them onto carts for return to the owners. This activity only ceased when the river came down in spate and the water was too muddy to be of any use for cleaning. It was rather a shock to see carpets treated in this way, for we somehow thought that carpet cleaning was a difficult process only to be carried out by specialists. In due course we ourselves tried to wash ours in the same way, copying the technique of the riverside men as we stamped back and forth on carpets in the bath. Rather to our surprise we were very successful, but anybody tempted to do the same should remember that in the hot dry atmosphere of Isfahan even the biggest and most sodden carpet dries within twenty-four hours.

Other, more reprehensible, methods are employed to mature new carpets as quickly as possible in order to take advantage of the European predilection for antiques. The quickest way to age a carpet is to put it in the dirt and subject it to heavy wear. Thus carpets are to be seen laid out in the alleyways of the bazaar or on the pavements or in the roadways of the town. The bazaar has the advantage of being very dirty and the traffic is very heavy: myriads of shuffling feet, people and camels, donkeys, horses and carts, sheep and goats. Very few weeks of this treatment are required to make a carpet look worn and stained and very aged. The wear and tear on carpets laid out on pavements and roadways is not so heavy, despite the motor-cars and trucks, but the bright sunlight soon fades the colours to desirable half-tones which give the carpet an antique look.

There is a common prejudice in favour of the old vegetable dyes as against the newer chemical ones. The old dyes, made from locally obtainable products such as pomegranate and saffron, are supposed to give faster colours and more attractive tones and to be less harmful to the material of the carpet. Personally, I think that the real trouble lies in the dyeing process, not the dyes themselves, for the Iranians still carry on unchanged their ancestral methods, which may be all right for vegetables but not for chemicals. In the gloomy recesses of the bazaar, where the dyeing is carried out, you may see open vats in which colours are boiling, piles of sodden hanks of newly dyed wool, thin half-naked youths, their hands and arms, legs and feet stained with colour like the Jumbies, struggling to steep materials in hot liquids, all looming mysteriously in the obscurity, a true alchemist's parlour.

Above, on the domed and vaulted mud roof of the bazaar, the wool and cloth are hung up to dry. It was quite without knowing what I would find that I penetrated to the roof of the bazaar, some thirty feet up, and saw the most extravagant, undisciplined display of colour in Isfahan, hundreds of square yards of colour laid out in broad patches, white and black, blue, cherry red, imperial purple, orange, canary yellow and many others, as much of a contrast with the prevailing mud-brick colour of the houses as the flower-fields of a commercial seed-grower against the English countryside.

One important element of an education in carpets is to learn the right sort of price to pay. There are many stages at which the sale, the



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R. A. B

Wool and cloth for the carpets are dyed in open vats, after which they are spread out to dry on the roofs of the bazaar at Isfahan



Bishop

Kodachrome

'The characteristic motif of the design of Isfahan carpets is the arabesques copied from the mosaics of the Safavid mosques.' An example is the dome of the Madrasseh in Isfahan, a seminary for *mullahs* built c. 1710, in the reign of the last Safavid monarch

A very fine Isfahan rug, with 100 knots to the square centimetre

Ferraniacolor

R. A. B.





Kodachrome

Carpet washing in Teheran. As in Isfahan, 'men could be seen daily by the riverside, vigorously beating carpets, dragging them into the water, stamping backwards and forwards on them'

exchange of property, may take place. The ultimate user most commonly buys carpets in the bazaar or shop. Here the buyer has the advantage of being able to choose from a wide range of carpets, but he pays for the power of choosing. If the buyer knows exactly what sort of carpet he wants, he may go to the locality of weaving and buy directly from the carpet-makers, thus cutting out the middleman; for example, carpets in Nejadabad are perhaps 10 per cent cheaper than the same ones in the bazaar in Isfahan, but naturally in Nejadabad there are only Nejadabad carpets, and moreover it is necessary to know the carpet-makers and which carpets are ready for sale. Those with time to wait may buy carpets while still on the loom. Between two and four months before the carpet is due to be completed it is possible to see how it is going to turn out, and this is therefore a suitable time to buy. The reduction in price is considerable, perhaps 15 per cent or 20 per cent on the completed price, but the buyer risks damage to the carpet and unconscientious workmanship during the remaining period, and, above all, that completion will be delayed beyond the due date.

Besides the variations in price related to the stage of purchase there are chance fluctuations dependent on news of current prices in Beirut, the chief entrepot for trade to Europe and America, and on the proximity of a visit by a European or American commercial buyer. These people bargain and purchase in bulk. Thus they deplete stocks and have a very unsettling effect on prices in provincial carpet markets while they are operating. In addition, there is a seasonal fluctuation, purchasers being very active, and prices rising, in the period preceding *Noruz*, the Persian equivalent of Christmas, while immediately after stocks are exhausted and there is not much variety on offer.

Finally, there is the element of bargaining, working within the limits of the standard range of prices set by the factors just described. For me and, I suppose, many other Englishmen, there is something faintly immoral, certainly distasteful, about bargaining. If a man sets a price we tend to think that that is the price he wants or needs and, *grasso modo*, the only price he is prepared to accept. The buyer makes his decision, taking the price as fixed. This attitude is, I think, peculiarly Western. Whatever its origin, we rationalize it now by pointing to the general convenience of having a fixed price and the waste of time involved in bargaining.

However, after living for a while in Isfahan I began to appreciate the Iranian point of view, and even to enjoy it. It was essential to avoid becoming emotionally involved; to remain completely detached, even in the midst of a fierce contest. The price asked by the seller is only a basis for discussion; it is up to the buyer to change the seller's ideas by logical argument, by subliminal persuasion or by sheer erosion of time and reiteration. Each knows what the other is trying to do and counters every move like a chess player. The buyer tries to sweeten the atmosphere with witty verbal rallies, gossip, rumour or informed observation about the world in general, while the seller continually sends out for refreshing draughts of tea, Coca-Cola or sweetmeats to put and keep the buyer on the wrong foot of gratitude. It is, of course, a great help for the buyer to have ready money in his pocket, since the feel of the notes often persuades a seller to clinch a deal at a price somewhat less than his previously stated irreducible minimum, but the money should only be produced at the critical moment. A successful bargainer needs the intellectual agility of a crossword fiend, the psychological sense of timing of a poker player, the calm detachment of a chess master, and, above all, leisure. A satisfactory bargain cannot be hurried.

A proper bargain should end, like a draw at cricket, with neither side satisfied. Of all the times that I bargained for a carpet, only once was I sure that I had got the better of the deal.

A man on a bicycle was in the habit of calling at our house, bringing a carpet or two for us to see. They were not bad, but we never bought from him as our carpet education was still in progress. After a while he began to bring carpets of lower quality, hinting that we were too poor to buy the good ones. This we countered by saying it was not the amount of money as such that we were interested in, but only that the price should be right for the quality of carpet. Thus honours were even, when, shortly before the day we were due to leave (which he knew, and thus had to make a special effort to catch us before we went), he brought a Qum rug, very dirty, which took our fancy, so we asked him to leave it for a day or two on trial. We liked it so much that we were prepared to buy, though there was a considerable difference between his idea of the price and ours. It happened that on the day appointed to clinch the deal we went for a picnic in the desert, and arrived home late, to



Carpets are laid out in Persian alleys and roads so that the sun can fade their colours to half-tones to take the newness out of them; or they may provide a suitably lavish road-surface for important occasions, such as the visit of President Eisenhower to Persia at the end of last year





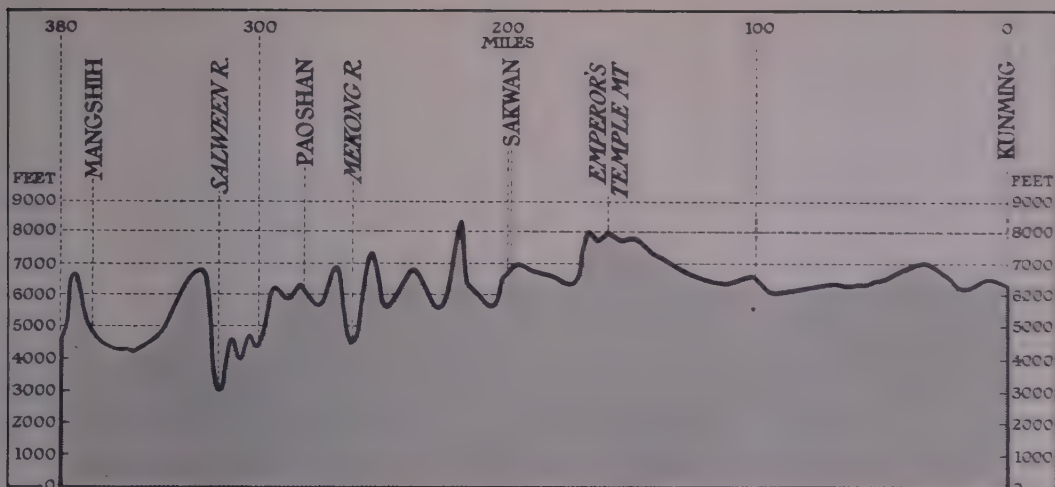


Persians can afford to pay relatively high prices for carpets, since they do not have to buy furniture as well; a carpet not only covers the floor, it takes the place of tables and chairs

find our friend waiting impatiently on the pavement. I settled down there and then, tired, dirty, hungry and thirsty, to make the bargain. The negotiations underwent numerous vicissitudes, including the seller twice leaving our house with the carpet, and once calling on my wife, who was bathing the children, to help him against me. Finally after an hour and a half, as daylight was fading, very cross, he agreed to my price, somewhat more than I originally thought, but a lot less than he had asked. While I was counting the money, a longish process as the bank had cashed my cheque in one-tomaun notes—imagine paying upwards of seventy pounds in shillings!—he pulled out a flick-knife and stropped it thoughtfully on his palm. Then, looking levelly at me, he demanded a percentage of the purchase price in personal compensation for his trouble. He did not get it, but for a moment I wondered what might happen. It was only later that I realized how, by chance, I had got the better of the bargain. He had probably

borrowed money for a few days to buy the carpet to sell to me, hoping to make a little on the transaction. But because we were late back, and because I had taken so long to come to the point, the loan was overdue and there was no other customer in sight. Time, though I didn't know it, had put him in my hands, and I could have made an even better deal.

Carpets soon become a dominant motif in the thoughts of foreigners who go to live in Isfahan. Carpets are an absorbing and recurrent subject of conversation, like football or cars. The appearance of a new carpet in anybody's house provokes a lively and informed discussion on its merits, while guests on entering a room will, as likely as not, bend down and turn a carpet back in order to examine its quality more closely. It is a craze which grows on you like a bad habit, causing you to spend far more on carpets than you need to or can afford. But at least, in such an atmosphere, you develop a taste for carpets, and appreciate them as never before.



A. J. Thornton

THE Burma Road is one of the very few major war-time constructions that serves a useful purpose in peace. For 440 miles, more than two-thirds of its total length, it runs through an area in China where no road of any sort existed before; and the terrain through which it had to be built must have seemed to its engineers next to impossible. But with the money and urgency of war it was carved across the land by local labour in a remarkably short time.

In those days munition- and supply-convoys bound from Lashio in north Burma, bombed and harassed by Japanese planes, ground on doggedly from west to east, eventually reaching Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province in south-west China. But now the greater part of loaded traffic sets off from Kunming and passes west to supply the underdeveloped, and largely unmapped, tribal areas towards the Burmese border. It was in this direction that I travelled, exploring some of the immediate surroundings of the road as I went.

Kunming, where I stayed a week or so, is a large country town dozing at the head of its lake. Its functions in life are the collection and redistribution of rice from the surrounding plains; it is a centre for water transport and the products of lake fishing, and there are a few factories exploiting natural resources. It is also the administrative capital of the remote multi-

The Burma Road

by

NIGEL CAMERON

Mr Cameron is the author of The Chinese Smile which was published by Hutchinson in 1958

racial province so often disowned in the past by Imperial central governments.

If the town is undistinguished, Kunming Lake is one of the most beautiful in a land of poetically celebrated waters. The famous Long Scrolls carved on wood in a pavilion at the lakeside accurately describe its charm: 'The waves of Kunming Lake are running sweetly before my eyes. I have unbuttoned my gown and hold my

hat in my hand to enjoy the grand sweep of the lake. It is 500 *li* from end to end, gripped like a long jewel in a setting of hills . . . ' West Mountain, flanking the lake, is studded with temples set as in Chinese painting in groves of slender bamboo. Strolling on a perfect summer afternoon from place to place there, the literal quality of much Chinese painting again struck me. What we in the West are inclined to think is an allusive art is so often an exact representation of the actual Chinese scene.

With my interpreter, Lee, I climbed the path hewn from the cliff-face leading to a Taoist shrine called Dragon's Gate where a panoramic view of the lake spreads out 200 feet below, and where, the local story says, a love-sick sculptor carved the grotesque deities we found there before casting himself into the lake. Lines of transport boats were sailing up to Kunming under square sails; villages dotted the promontories, their shores cluttered with boats. And

when we descended a crowd of excited small boys showed me how the cormorants perched on those boats were trained to fish. A string is loosely tied round the neck of each bird so that he cannot swallow, and he then flies back to the fisherman with his catch in his beak.

The children led me to a field where small Chinese horses were grazing. 'Are there horses like ours in your country?' they asked.

'Ours are a bit bigger, but much the same,' I said.

'Oh! *Bigger* ones!' they cried, with evident disbelief.

It was late afternoon when we drove back to town. 'The setting sun gilds the clouds and the jade wings of homing birds. The perfuming paddies fill the air . . .' Those Long Scrolls, for all their poetic wording, seemed to me the most perfect description of the scene.

We left Kunming at dawn one day and drove through the heavy mist. Occasional glimpses of moorland and paddy-fields appeared as the mist rose a little, but at mid-morning it was no higher than the branches of saplings, where it clung like cotton-wool. By that time we were beginning to climb and the road, when it could be seen ahead, looked like an arbitrary line scribbled up the face of the mountains. From this point on the Burma Road, right to the other end, there was hardly a level stretch. Until early afternoon the car kept edging upwards round innumerable hair-pin bends until we had entered the clouds and it seemed arrant foolishness to keep on. But

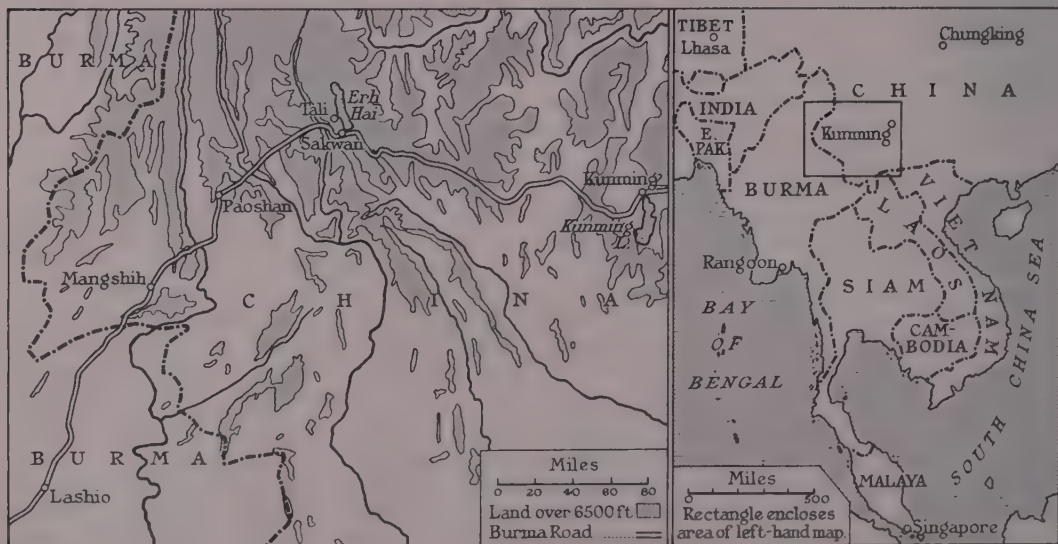
at last we reached Emperor's Temple Mountain Pass in a weird silent world of water vapour. Momentarily the clouds dissolved and we saw on all sides a fantastic jumble of dark and somehow malevolent mountains.

Agriculture had of course vanished long ago and at these levels only a thin forest grew. The sparse population is engaged in woodcutting, gathering medicinal and culinary leaves, and a little hunting to fill its cooking-pots. Despite torrents of rainwater which jet down unpredictably, the road is remarkably well kept. Each five-mile stretch is under the care of a team of men drawn from the local populace. Most whom I talked to seemed enthusiastic about maintaining their own little piece better than the adjacent portions. Every bend is cobbled and the surface is covered with stone chips laboriously made by hand at the side of the road from local stone.

But accidents are bound to happen on such a road. We were held up for a long time by a convoy of 20-ton lorries which had skidded all over the road and were towing each other out of the mud and rubble of a minor landslide.

From the pass we gradually descended over a series of switchbacks until fields came in sight. The bleak little villages of higher levels gave way to recognizably Chinese hamlets. And at dusk we were on a small rice-plain south of Erh Hai (Ear Lake).

(*Opposite*) Kunming Lake, from Dragon's Gate, a Taoist shrine cut in the face of a precipice on West Mountain



A. J. Thornton



‘What would you think of a nice hot bath before supper?’ said Lee, grinning.

It was the sort of remark that the traveller always hopes for but seldom hears. But at Sakwan by the lake there are hot springs which have been led into room-sized tubs made of Tali marble. There we wallowed gratefully for a time, Lee regretting that his seven children (whom he jokingly referred to as ‘my private army’) were not there with us.

Sakwan is a small country town with cobbled lanes. There was an airfield there during the war, so it has lost some of its old-fashioned character. A road strikes north from it along the western shore of Erh Hai to Tali, which is smaller and intensely Chinese with white houses surrounding courtyards in which families were threshing rice with flails. The cloud-capped mountains have

their feet in an extensive graveyard, and cranes paddle delicately in the shallows of the lake. This is the country of the tough and energetic Pai people, the first of the minority nationalities I saw on the Burma Road. But the district is a centre for many other peoples—Nashi, Liso and some Tibetans who are herdsmen in the hills. The history of the region, its long semi-independence from central control, and its predominantly non-Chinese population have lent a special character to it, which is reflected in speech, costume and local custom. The seasons tend to be sharply divided, a bitter windy winter following a warm summer. Wheat is as common a crop as rice.

On the map the distance from Sakwan to Paoshan looks slight. But a whole day’s arduous driving only just brought us there by sundown.

Rice-growing on the intensively cultivated lower slopes of a pass in the 8000-foot mountains near the Burma Road, between Kunming and Sakwan. Some of the fields are under water ready for planting





All Kodachromes by the au

Stonemasons at work by the shores of Erh Hai, 'the Ear-shaped Lake', which lies between Kunming and the Burma frontier. What must be one of the world's largest graveyards stretches between Sakwan at the lake's southern tip and Tali, half-way up on its western shore. Ever since the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906), when Tali was capital of an independent kingdom, this gentle slope between the Mountain of Nine Peaks and the placid waters of Erh Hai has been regarded as a highly propitious place for burial. From the distance the cemetery looks like a long white Giant's Causeway composed entirely of short headstones in the local granite. Towards Tali there are several slender white pagodas, and all along the road are villages of white houses frescoed in black and farms with curly black roofs





(Opposite) A girl of the Pai people who poled the author in a flat-bottomed boat along the shallows of Erh Hai. She wears national costume, as do many of this non-Chinese minority race who inhabit the hills and valleys around the lake. Of the 17,000,000 people in Yunnan, almost a third belong to various such minority races. *(Above)* A rough road follows the western shore of the lake, always thronged with laden horses of the Chinese breed, which are not much bigger than ponies. Strings of peasants lope along in rope sandals carrying their loads in the pans of a yoke which balances like the Scales of Justice. The women carry their babies pickaback in sacks



In a twenty-house village a little distance from the Sakwan-Tali road, a curious statue, which is neither lion nor dog but a bit of both, guards the entrance to a small temple, a bowl of incense-sticks under its nose. The central courtyard of the temple, and the goldfish pond in its midst equipped with a Chinese bridge of Tali marble, certainly date from Tang days; but with the Chinese genius for compromise much building has been added later in Ming times, around the 15th and 16th centuries. This temple is little known but looks extremely harmonious as it sleeps in the sun. The same architectural good sense is shown at the other end of the village where a local builder has recently put up a row of shops and houses

Immediately on leaving Sakwan the road begins to soar up through a startling country of cliff and gorge, alternating with valleys of sub-tropical forest and rice-fields. Through this area escapes part of the limitless water of the Tibetan plateau. The Mekong River dashes down in its valley only twenty or thirty miles away from the almost parallel Salween in another gorge. The Burma Road crosses both on suspension bridges, the epic of whose defence from bombing lends a background of heroism to a scene which is in itself dramatic. At one point I stopped on the brow of a pass to look away north at the Salween foaming along in its valley. The road wound down to the bridge and then up again to a point on the opposite side which could not have been more than three crow-flying miles away. But to drive there took the next four hours.

Here the vegetation is frankly tropical. The

loudest cicadas I have ever heard clang like Chinese cymbals in the valleys; there is terraced rice, strange trees, the familiar smell of exuberant growth in a humid climate. Apart from small crops of rice squeezed into terraces sometimes only a yard broad, some of the best *lac* in China (used as a dye and for making shellac) exudes from the local trees and forms a source of income for the people. There is a mixture of tribes here, and the more remote ones living in the depths of unexplored mountain forest have only recently been contacted. The teams of road-menders began to wear red shorts and singlets from this point, and steam-rollers gave way to stone rollers pulled by hand and by mules and donkeys. I was reluctant to leave this part of the country. Every difficult inch of it is clothed in tree, plant and moss, inhabited by strange fauna. And the variety of facial types amongst

One wall in the courtyard of the temple in the same village was frescoed with mythological figures such as the Tiger God. The custodian was an old man whose yellow face and wispy beard were completely appropriate to his surroundings, and he showed the author round with evident pride





The Burma Road as it winds down to cross the sub-tropical valley of the Salween River, half-way along its 1750-mile course from the mountains of eastern Tibet to Moulmein on the Burmese coast

the people who came to talk to me when I stopped on the roadside reminded me that there lay about me a life's work in anthropology.

Paoshan is a full-blown country town, girdled with old walls and entered through fat Ming gates whose tiles are feathered with grasses. It sits complacently in its circular plain of closely planted fields. It is a water-plain, the varying colours of green revealing the stage of growth of the paddy crop. It is also an intensely ordered Chinese place, everyone and everything dedicated to growing the rice. From the streets of Paoshan where the markets are held under orange-varnished paper umbrellas I used to stroll out into the country amongst the throngs

of peasants loaded with farm implements and bundles of straw. The mule- and horse-teams drawing carts have harnesses and trappings of red wool decorated with small round lucky mirrors and huge red pompoms jiggling as they jog along. The tremendous, controlled industry of those Chinese peasants sometimes made me feel I ought to be doing more useful things than merely observing them.

From Paoshan onwards the terrain is similar to that of northern Burma, on which it abuts, with hills jungled over the top and streams of delicious water chattering their way down under matted vegetation. Through this more luxuriant country another day's circuitous drive brought

us to Mangshih on another rice-plain.

Some years before I arrived in Mangshih, the Chinese and Burmese Premiers held a meeting there to discuss their border question—now happily resolved. The Rest House in which I stayed was built to house the party since no other suitable accommodation existed. It was a curious building with huge bedrooms in which were four-posters the size of family vaults. But what it lacked in amenities was admirably made up for in the enthusiastic attentions of several Tai youths. Their assiduous will to please was only matched by their ignorance of what a European might want, and by the efforts of the cook who made a succession of extravagant Chinese and local meals.

The Tais are a happy people, delicately made and little darker of skin than Chinese, but

totally different in origin and custom. Their cheerfulness made it hard to realize that a few years ago the plain of Mangshih had an evil reputation for plague and smallpox, while other endemic diseases were cholera, typhoid, encephalitis and diphtheria. But a few minutes' walk in the streets, where faces pitted like the surface of the moon recall at least the smallpox, confirm the statistics. The comparative absence of old people reminds you that the expectation of life was very short. Within recent years the major scourges have been wiped out, and the tyrannical rule of hereditary Saubwas has gone. But it will take a long time to alter the feudal misery of the past centuries.

The plain is closely planted with rice, tobacco, coffee and a variety of local vegetables. Its streams turn small waterwheels for irrigation,

Terraced paddy-fields beside the Burma Road as it descends from the mountains of southern China to the plain of Paoshan. The road is just as twisty here as it is among the precipices higher up



Tai girls planting rice near the Burma Road in the plain of Mangshih. The Tais, who are another non-Chinese minority race, were until recently ruled by local feudal autocrats called Saubwas





A Tai woman with her grandchild on the porch of her house. On her head is the black turban traditionally worn by married Tai women. In the background, her niece is spinning raw cotton

The Jimpuos, yet another minority people encountered on the Burma Road, scratch a precarious living on the hills in the extreme south-western part of Yunnan. (Right) They bury their dead on a hill-top under a stone cairn, with on its summit a bamboo wigwam surmounted by a crude representation of the animal into which the departed spirit has entered. (Below) A Jimpuo drummer. A ring of cooked rice stuck to the end of the drum is enlarged or diminished to alter pitch





The Jimpuos are pantheists, and sacrifice to a bewildering variety of gods in order to avert ill luck in any form. A chicken has been sacrificed to the Earth God, and is then cooked, after which it is portioned out on leaves to the priest and others partaking in the ceremony

and its distances are nicely punctuated with spires of Buddhist temples. I found it a charming and relaxing place and enjoyed the easy friendliness of the Tais.

Quite different are the surrounding hills where the primitive Jimpuos live in their silent villages. They are a curious haunted people whose faces show a sort of primaeval puzzlement hard to turn into a smile. Their lives are ruled by ghosts and spirits of the dead, to whom innumerable sacrifices have to be made to ensure that life will not end in dire calamity. Their villages lie concealed in the misty hills, random collections of huts made of split bamboos from which cooking smoke filters out and through which very little light can enter. Approaching a village you come to the Ghost Poles equipped with sharpened sticks pointing away from the houses so that evil spirits will impale themselves there. The rotting altars are festering with skulls of sacrificed buffaloes. Small black pigs rootle in garbage-heaps, and an old half-mad priest, who went with me in one village, kept talking to them because they contained the spirits of some

departed Jimpuos. Their tombs are set on hill-tops, surrounded by tall bamboos in which notches are cut so that the wind moans through them with a continuous lament.

The precipitous fields of dry paddy which the Jimpuos cultivate are seldom enough to sustain life, and hunting in the woods must be relied on to fill the cooking-pot. Only recently under Chinese guidance have they begun to cultivate on less primitive lines.

From Mangshih to the Burma frontier is a mere twenty miles of Jimpuo hills. And there, such is the arbitrary nature of frontiers in lands like this, you find you are in Burma. The only dividing line that makes sense has been drawn according to tradition in the matter of paying taxes.

Driving back to Kunming I found myself wondering, as we threaded our way in and out of clouds, how anyone in their senses ever thought of building the Burma Road. Fortunately they did. For without it something in the nature of an expedition would be necessary to reach those remote tribal areas.

Journey into East

MOST Communist countries are rather difficult to enter, and East Germany is no exception, but it has one loophole, one part of its territory which can be entered without any formality at all. The ordinary visitor to West Berlin can at any time put his passport into his pocket and stroll, normally quite unchallenged, beneath the restored Brandenburger Tor straight into the Communist world, into the 'Democratic Sector of Berlin', seat of the government of the 'German Democratic Republic'.

This ease of entry into East Berlin has one unfortunate result; it encourages rather sweeping generalizations about East Germany based on a part of its territory which is far from typical of the whole. Anyone who leaves the lights and luxury of West Berlin, 'shop window of the West', to cross the sector boundary into East Berlin comes into a world of destruction. The shattered towers of Hitler's underground shelter still lie blasted onto their sides in a vast open space that was once the Whitehall of Berlin.

Only here and there can be seen a patched and peeling government building continuing in use among the ruins. It is easy in this dead heart of the city, this administrative quarter which once controlled the lives of 70,000,000 Germans, to write off East Germany as a country where nothing is done.

Yet this ruin is not the real East Berlin, far less the real East Germany. Bombing and partition have turned the city inside out, so that life goes on in the suburbs. It is there that reconstruction is most vigorous, but the casual visitor on the afternoon coach-trip from West Berlin ('no audible comments, no flourishing of Western newspapers, no photographing of persons in uniform') sees only the worst example. He is inevitably taken down the Stinallee, past miles of stiff and pompous façades in the ornate style popular in Moscow ten years ago. Even the East Germans now regard the Stalin-alley as something of an embarrassing family heirloom, unfortunately far too massive to

By courtesy of Gesellschaft für Kulturelle Verbindungen mit dem Ausland, Berlin W.8



Germany

by

T. H. ELKINS

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conceal. Already in other parts of East Berlin much lighter and more modern flats are going up, with the kind of open layout in wide green spaces long familiar to the West. The main streets are crowded here, and if the standard of service in the shops still has the take-it-or-leave-it quality of the days of rationing, at least there seem to be mounds of sausage and butter and tins of Chinese fruit and miles of rather muddy-coloured textiles. But to see the real growing-points of East Germany today it is necessary to go beyond the capital into the countryside, and especially into the thinly-peopled region that lies to the south and east, along the present Oder-Neisse frontier with Poland.

Fortunately the kindness of my geographical colleagues in East Germany caused the barriers separating East Berlin from East Germany proper to be lifted, permitting me to make a journey through this country of sand and forests, the former Prussian province of Brandenburg. In the forests there are naturally a few fertile

(Below) Schwarze Pumpe, the biggest building project in East Germany, is intended to produce electricity or gas and coke from the local reserves of brown coal





All four photographs by the author



(Above) The 'stiff and pompous façades' of the Stalinallee in East Berlin reflect the architecture of post-war Moscow in its most unprepossessing and dolorous form. *(Left)* In Potsdam, south-west of Berlin, youthful Communist enthusiasts do voluntary Sunday work to help rebuild their town. *(Opposite, top)* In front of the Brandenburg Gate in Potsdam is an example of the political propaganda to be found throughout East Germany, but on this occasion *(opposite, bottom)* the people of Potsdam seem more interested in the activities of a competitor in the junior bicycle race



stretches, where the ice-sheets which once covered all northern Germany left behind some loam instead of the usual sterile sand. Such regions were seized upon by the mediaeval German peasants when, seeking a new land and a chance of salvation through the conversion of the Slav, they made their great colonizing drive to the east.

At first glance the villages they established seem to have changed no more in the last fifteen years of political upheaval than they did in the previous 700 of their existence. The same farms stand on either side of the long village green, the *Anger*. On the green the church is built of rounded boulders brought down from Scandinavia by the ice-sheets long ago; the same material makes a devilish paving for the road. Ducks fuss round the pond, an old man goes by prodding a sow in front of him, a child takes a single ewe to feed along the field paths. Village life, it seems, is going on according to its unchanging rhythms.

Yet a glance into any farmyard shows that it is empty, but for a few fowls. The land is now tilled and harvested by machinery from the 'Machine Tractor Station', established in the estate-buildings of a vanished landlord, whose mansion is now transformed into a 'House of Culture'. The cattle have been banished to the new wooden stalls of the collective farm, at the

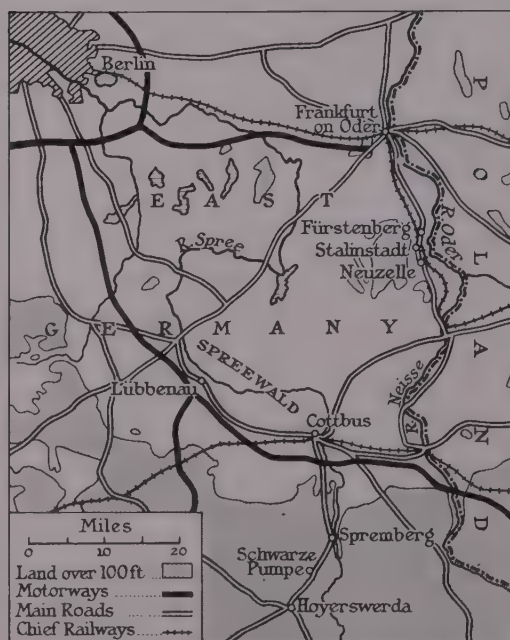
end of the village. Here they help themselves from a large central stack of fodder, instead of being laboriously fed by hand, a logical response to East Germany's acute labour shortage.

But the forests dominate, mile upon mile of pure stands of pine, growing in the vast spreads of dune-rippled sands washed out of the retreating ice-sheets. It is a sombre landscape, only given some liveliness where glaciation, as if in compensation for the sterility of the sand, has left long, branching lakes. These are Berlin's playgrounds, lively in summer with swimmers and yachts and pleasure-steamers.

The forests and lakes can be followed eastwards as far as the Oder and Neisse rivers, which form the present eastern frontier of the German people. The boundary is not recognized by West Germany, which still claims territory far into Silesia and East Prussia as German, but is accepted by the East German government as 'the frontier of peace', to quote the current official slogan.

Whatever may be thought about the justice of this transfer of territory, it is none the less moving to stand at a viewpoint like that above the Cistercian monastery of Neuzelle, overlooking the confluence of the Oder and Neisse rivers. From here the silver thread of the Oder can be seen swinging in from the east, passing forests and fields and village spires which were German for 700 years, and from which all Germans have been expelled. Once the monastery ruled its own little ecclesiastical state of fifty villages and the nearby town of Fürstenberg. Now its buildings are incongruously shared between a seminary for Roman Catholic priests and a state training college for women teachers. The young girls, emerging from their classes in dialectical materialism, mingle in the courtyard with the faithful who have turned Neuzelle into a centre of pilgrimage for those whose homes once lay beyond the broad river to the east.

The key town in the mediaeval German advance to the Oder and beyond was Frankfurt on Oder, situated at the vital crossing where the river breaks through one of the great terminal moraines left behind by the last ice-sheet. Even in the 19th century it was an important railway and administrative centre, with a big Prussian garrison. Today Frankfurt seems half dead. Its heart is a great empty space, from which the ruins of the mediaeval streets have been removed and tipped into the Oder valley to make a goods yard for the exchange of rail traffic between



A. J. Thornton



The author

The forests of Brandenburg are the East Berliners' summer playground: miles and miles of pines and lakes in the unfertile sandy wastes left by the retreating ice-sheets of the glacial age

East Germany and the U.S.S.R. The town has almost an east-European appearance; farmers spread their vegetables for sale in the open air, and queue at shops set up in temporary shacks. The green fields across the river are part of Poland: Frankfurt is at the end of the road.

Yet the economic tempo is obviously quickening in all these eastern parts of the country. The East German government believes in bringing industry to 'backward' rural areas. Frankfurt has already acquired a new electrical industry, and the expansion of workers' flats into the empty heart of the town marks the progress of recovery.

On a more impressive scale is the entirely new iron plant at Stalinstadt, just upstream. East Germany, although it has practically no coal or iron, was no exception to the post-war Communist economic dogma that every state should have its own heavy industry. The Stalin iron plant is a monument to this policy, a line of six blast furnaces standing above the Oder, using

coke from Poland and ore railed all the way from the U.S.S.R.

To house the workers of Stalinstadt the pine forests were swept away, and a 'new socialist town' created out of a desert of swirling sand. The plan is reminiscent of the towns of the princes in 18th-century Germany, all monumental straight lines and triumphal ways, although this time the main parade street leads not to the prince's palace but to the factory gate. Rigidly lining the straight streets are more of the Muscovite apartment blocks already familiar from the Stalinallee in East Berlin. There are generously equipped crèches and kindergartens where the women of the town may deposit their children before going off to a day's work in the ironworks. Little crocodiles of infants being shepherded along the streets by a kindergarten nurse are one of the most characteristic sights of this socialist town, which has been blessed with the same soaring birthrate as the new towns in Britain.



Both photographs by courtesy of Gesellschaft für Kulturelle Verbindungen mit dem Ausland, Berlin W.8



Farming in East Germany has been affected by politics, and collective farms are now the order of the day; and since labour is in very short supply, mechanization is inevitable. (*Opposite, top*) Cattle help themselves on an agricultural cafeteria system; while (*opposite, bottom*) combine harvesters harvest corn in place of the old methods. (*Right*) In the Spreewald swamps, south-east of Berlin, the Sorbs or Wends, a Slav minority, have for centuries resisted all attempts by the Saxons and Prussians to assimilate them. Now under Russian influence they are once again allowed to use their own language, as the sign-posts show. (*Below*) The country of the Spreewald is a network of channels and islands, and the inhabitants have to go everywhere in punts



courtesy of Deutsches Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig





From the author

Although East Germany has hardly any coal or iron its industrial progress has been impressive in recent years: flats in the new town at Stalinstadt built to house workers at an iron plant

Turning south again, the pines and sand give way to the Spreewald, a famous tourist region, but one which has also not escaped the intrusion of industry. The Spreewald is the product of the Ice Age, when vast swollen rivers surged round the edge of the retreating ice-sheet, cutting channels many miles in width spilling away towards the open sea in the neighbourhood of Hamburg. Now part of one of these great trenches is occupied by eighty square miles of marsh, through which the Spree filters in hundreds of separate channels. Once the marsh was covered with a forest of alder, ash and oak, which provided a refuge for a Slav people, the Sorbs or Wends, displaced by the advance of the German mediaeval colonists. In this isolated region the Sorbs have for centuries resisted the efforts of Saxon and Prussian schoolmasters and drill-sergeants to make them give up their language, efforts which culminated under Hitler with the actual confiscation and burning of Sorbish books. Today the Sorbs have their own

books again, and schools in their own language; even the signposts are in Sorbish.

In the quaking soil of the Spreewald everybody goes by punt. From the landing-stage in front of his house the farmer poles himself off to his island fields of rye or early vegetables in the marsh, and ferries back green grass or loads of hay to feed his cattle. The household shopping, children for school, wedding parties, funerals, all must be poled along the bewildering network of channels. This is one of the very few places left in Germany where the wearing of a regional dress, at least by the older women, is genuine and natural, not just something kept up for the benefit of the tourist trade.

Yet even this peaceful backwater is threatened by the march of industry, for just to the south in Lower Lusatia (Niederlausitz) lie the greatest untapped reserves of brown coal or lignite in East Germany, a state almost completely lacking other forms of fuel. Already the Spree runs black with mine effluent, killing the fish and

The town hall. Stalinstadt is mostly designed in the 'Communist-monumental' style, but some of the latest flats, though monotonous in detail, are being laid out on more attractive lines

The author



water-plants. Now industry is invading the Spreewald itself. Much of the brown coal is burnt in power-stations, and power-stations need vast quantities of water, which is available in the Spreewald. In consequence thousands of workers have been brought to the region to build at Lübbenau what will be, it is claimed, the greatest power-station in Central Europe. The first of its chimneys dominate the district, and they will soon be challenged by those of an even larger plant situated a few miles upstream. Even when the construction gangs have departed, the little town of Lübbenau will have doubled its former inhabitants. It remains to be seen how resistant the long-cherished Sorbish culture will be to the invasion of 20th-century technology.

Southwards from the Spreewald it is monotonous sand-and-pine country again, without even the lakes that provide some variety farther north. Lower Lusatia is a poor land, thinly peopled, with only a few rye fields to interrupt the forest. But the trees are falling before the advance of immense open pits, sometimes miles across and

250 feet deep, in which brown coal is won from beneath the sand. Everywhere smoking chimneys, rising above the forest, show where the low-grade brown coal is being transformed for use as briquettes, electricity or chemicals.

The showpiece of the district is 'Kombinat Schwarze Pumpe', which gains its curious name of 'Black Pump' from an inn on the Spremberg-Hoyerswerda road. This in turn took its name from the pump which once stood in front of it for watering horses. This insignificant corner of the forest is the scene of East Germany's greatest construction project.

The idea was to use the limited remaining reserves of brown coal as a raw material rather than a fuel. The best-quality coal was to be turned into metallurgical coke and by-products by a process already working at Lauchhammer, also in Lower Lusatia. It is not very good metallurgical coke, but East Germany has practically no normal coal reserves, and to make even poor coke from brown coal is a technical miracle. Lower-grade coal will be turned into electricity

A kindergarten in the home of a former factory owner. In the new towns of East Germany the birthrate is soaring and crèches and kindergartens are essential so that mothers may go to work

The author





The author

Hoyerswerda is being expanded as a new town for workers at Schwarze Pumpe. Here the planning is somewhat more advanced than it is at Stalinstadt and building-methods are highly mechanized

or gas. The proposed scale is fantastic: every day the pits would have to deliver to the plant 100,000 tons of coal, that is 100 full train-loads.

Nor are these just paper plans. The pines have been drained of their last drops of resin and felled, and giant excavators, each the size of a small factory on wheels, have moved in to tear up the glacial sand and free the coal beneath. A large power-station and the largest briquette plant in East Germany are both substantially complete. Only the last stage, which should turn the briquettes into coke, is yet to be built. Nor is this all, for if Schwarze Pumpe is ever completed as planned it will be three times its present size, with three power-stations, three briquette plants and, presumably, three batteries of coke-

ovens side by side.

The visitor is stunned and confused by the sheer size of the project, by the tangles of pipes running all about, and by the bustle of 16,000 workers labouring in the pitilessly swirling sand of Lower Lusatia. Particularly striking is the use made wherever possible of women workers, a symptom of East Germany's great labour shortage. It is a woman who holds the plumber's tools or the surveyor's tape. Even the great tower cranes of the builders have women operators, a spectacle which would bring a British construction-site out in an instant strike.

The workers from the new plant cannot be housed at Schwarze Pumpe, lest valuable coal reserves be sealed off beneath bricks and mortar.



The author

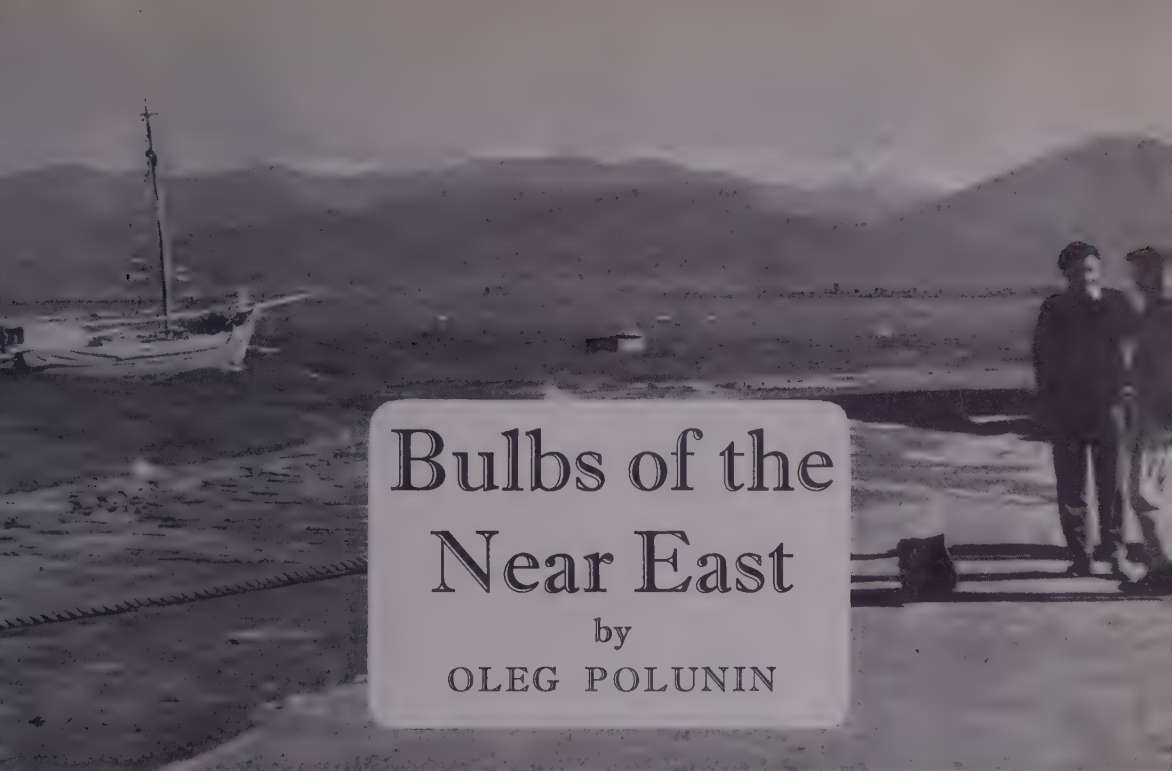
In East Germany scrap collection is one of the jobs of the Communist youth movement. These flats at Hoyerswerda show that even the latest Iron Curtain town planning lags behind the West

Accordingly, Hoyerswerda, six miles away to the south, is being expanded into a 'new socialist town'. As originally planned, Hoyerswerda would have been built in a style 'just like the Stalinallee in Berlin', as a contemporary newspaper report put it. Fortunately the retreat from Stalinism came in time to allow Hoyerswerda to be saved from this fate and replanned on lines familiar in the West, with a number of small neighbourhood units situated between, not upon, the main traffic arteries.

Architecturally, there is nothing very striking to see at Hoyerswerda, for all that it is something of an East German show-piece, but the building methods are certainly remarkable. Bricks and mortar have been abandoned; blocks of flats are now assembled in batches by tall travelling cranes, which lift into place concrete slabs the size of the wall of a room, complete with door and window frames. Mortar for fixing

is pumped up through hoses. There is a great saving of labour, but the extreme standardization leads to monotony. The same rather barrack-like blocks tend to be repeated again and again, their similarity rather emphasized than concealed by the addition of occasional coloured balconies and the like in an effort at variety.

But with towns like Hoyerswerda and Stalin-stadt, industrial plants like Schwarze Pumpe or the even more recent oil refinery farther north at Schwedt, a new landscape is being created. Just as the pine woods are giving place to factories and houses, so the traditional society, predominantly rural, is giving place to a society that is urban and, of course, Communist-dominated. Whatever one may think of this society, it is impossible not to be impressed by the visible evidence of the changes that are taking place in this former 'undeveloped area' of Germany.



Bulbs of the Near East

by
OLEG POLUNIN

All photographs by the author

The Lycian Taurus mountains from Fethiye. The coastline is wild and jagged, and the mountains lie close to the sea. Forests of liquidambar grow in the valleys, and of pines in the foothills

BULBS are well adapted to live in the great variety of climates to be found in the Near East. They grow best where warmth and fresh spring rains allow them to draw quickly on their food reserves, enabling them to flower before the ordinary herbaceous plants over-top them. After a short period of feeding and fruiting they die back, and when other plants are suffering from drought they remain protected underground.

In consequence the Near East is a rich hunting-ground for bulbs. They flower throughout the autumn and winter in sheltered places along the coast; but undoubtedly the best time to make a visit is in the early spring. Up country on the lower hill-slopes and in the limestone gorges there is a great variety of species to be seen, but only where the alpine snows flush the meadows and screes are they to be found in profusion. Then sometimes by the patches of melting snow they flower in hundreds and thousands.

Many of these bulbs are more familiar to us than one might expect. Our winter-flowering hyacinths, cyclamen, scillas, tulips and crocuses originate in many cases from these parts.

A short while ago I and a friend, a fellow-

botanist, made an unusual journey by Land-Rover along the southern coast of Turkey. Road-making is an important part of present-day Turkish development, and many places now are accessible to vehicles which a few years ago could only be reached by long treks on horseback.

We arrived in Istanbul at the end of March. Cold mists poured down through the Bosphorus from the Black Sea; snow lay on the surrounding hills. The first pink primroses and early celandines were just coming into flower in the hedgerows; even less advanced than at home in Surrey. In the ancient forest of Belgrade above the Bosphorus the place of the bluebell was taken by the 'two-leaved' scilla, while the early golden-flowered crocus, *C. aureus*, was still in flower.

We drove southwards hoping to collect more rare crocuses on Mount Olympus (Ulu Dag), above Bursa, but our arrival coincided with heavy snow showers which blanketed the mountain almost down to the town.

We continued south, and by the end of the second day, beyond Smyrna, the sun began to shine. The tall pink asphodels which lined the roadside were in flower and the first scarlet



Lycian tombs of the 4th century A.D. are carved out of the limestone in the ancient city of Telmessus (now Fethiye). In the interior of each tomb is a chamber where the dead were laid

anemones dotted the still brown meadows. This lovely anemone (which is the parent of the well-known St Brigid anemone) occurs in many shades of colour, from white, pink, scarlet to blue. We made a short detour to visit the extensive ruins of Ephesus and here, surprisingly enough, we made one of our first gatherings. Among the seats of the great amphitheatre, where St Paul once preached to the Ephesians, grew the Neapolitan cyclamen. While the caretaker was looking the other way we prised up several large potato-like corms for our collections.

The southern coast of Turkey is very rugged. Limestone mountains come down to the sea; perpendicular cliffs and steep inaccessible valleys at the head of narrow sheltered inlets are the rule. The crags are often covered in scattered pine woods and the typical *maquis* of the Mediterranean. We drove the Land-Rover over an atrocious road along the narrow Doric

peninsula towards the ancient Greek city of Cnidus which was situated at its tip. Here in the maquis we found an unusual species of cyclamen and a very rare yellow-flowered fritillary, and the tiny white lily, *Lloydia graeca*, closely allied to our own mountain *Lloydia* which is a great rarity in North Wales. There was a grape-hyacinth, blue above and yellow below, which smelt of bananas, and an iris reminiscent of our winter-flowering Iris 'stylosa'.

In this kind of country, particularly on limestone, one is likely to come across some of the many bizarre bee orchids of the Mediterranean. They are very strange, for they imitate the females of certain species of bumble bee with brown hairy 'bodies', striking patterns of yellow and brown and brilliant metallic blue-bottle patches. By some extraordinary evolutionary process bees and flowers have evolved together, and not only do the orchids imitate female bees

but they come into flower at the same time as the male takes to the wing and before the female is about. The males attempt to mate with the orchid flowers and thus bring about pollination; a long-term piece of calculated deception if ever there was one!

The small rough fields, often only a fraction of an acre in extent, which the inhabitants have cleared from the hillside, sometimes proved to be rich hunting-grounds for bulbs. The bulbs grow below the strike of the plough and thereby receive the full benefits of cultivation without disturbance. Several species of fritillary do well under these circumstances and it is always a great pleasure to come across a field of young spring corn with chestnut-brown bells swaying above the tops of the corn. Some species have striped green and brown flowers, others are quite green so that they can only be seen if one bends down and looks along the field at corn-tip level.

Sometimes one comes across the scarlet tulip similarly growing as a weed in a cornfield. The

plants multiply rapidly by offsets and may occur in great numbers. With bronzed flask-shaped buds which open among the corn into scarlet flowers with deep chocolate centres, it is one of the most striking plants that one can expect to see.

Once while cornfield-bulb collecting we were suddenly assaulted by a dangerous fusillade of limestone flakes—they have razor-sharp edges—and there appeared on the horizon from behind a rock a screaming, gesticulating and bombarding Turkish matron who gave us no quarter. This was the only occasion in Turkey when we were in danger of our lives!

Our aim on this journey was to collect along the whole length of the southern coastline of Turkey. As we drove eastwards along this wild coast the roads became rougher and rougher. It is a strangely deserted country with hardly a village or a ship to be seen; the Turks are not by nature maritime people. On our way to the port of Fethiye, the ancient Telmessus, we passed

Looking from the Cilician plain to the high Anti-Taurus mountains. Few roads cross the Taurus to Anatolia; the most famous passes through the Cilician Gates, route of many past conquerors



through the famous forests of liquidambar from which gum-styrax has been produced since the earliest historical times. The tree looks like a plane tree, and it has an unusual distribution, for its nearest relative is in North America; it is a small isolated relic of a species which was widely spread in pre-glacial times. Fethiye is worth a visit for its magnificent Lycian rock tombs with elaborate Doric porticos cut out of the rock, and in the forests behind, interesting cyclamen, irises and fritillaries grow.

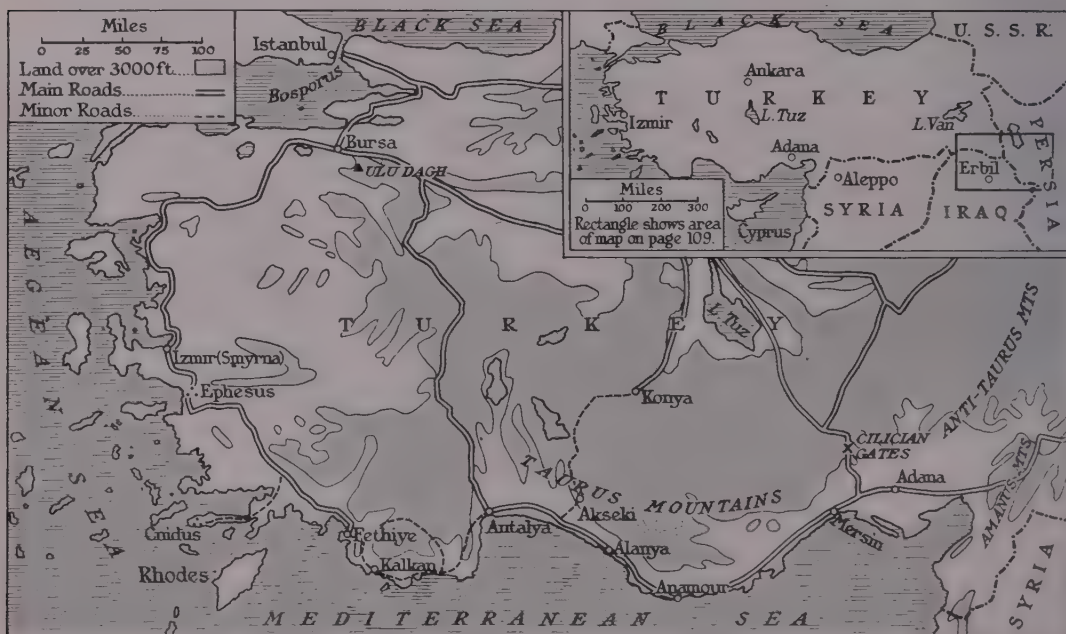
As we continued further east the road deteriorated to nothing more than a series of muddy tracks which only the solid-wheeled Turkish carts or the toughest lorries could negotiate. We passed the Greek city of Xanthus where the ruined theatre and temples lay half hidden in the scrub of the maquis, and a little further on, at the village of Kalkan, we found we could go no further. When we enquired of the locals, they one and all shook their heads and said '*yol bozuk*'—the road is broken. This was all the more exasperating since we knew that less than thirty miles further on a passable road existed which would take us eastwards. A local fisherman offered to load the Land-Rover onto his tiny fishing boat but we felt that the risk was not worth the candle; we did not wish to see the whole thing subside into the sea. There was

nothing for it but to retrace our tracks and make a wide detour.

The fertile plain of Pamphylia lies hemmed in by the rugged mountain massifs of the Lycian and Cilician Taurus. Behind the city of Antalya, in springtime, stretches a wide arc of snow-covered mountains protecting it from the searing winds which come down from the Anatolian plateau. Along the coastal strip among sand dunes and forests of maritime pine, we found the wild gladiolus and the attractive blue iris, *Iris sisyrinchium*, and the tiny yellow crocus-like *Romulea bulbocodium*—a very different flora.

There are very few roads running inland from the coast across the high Taurus to the plateau, and much of this difficult country can only be explored on horseback. One good road does however cross to Konya, and this we took to its highest point above Akseki. We found ourselves in quite a different world; cedars and the Cilician silver fir formed extensive forests on the mountains and snow lay about under the trees.

The first bulbs were just coming into flower right at the edge of the snow, or even sometimes growing through it. The orange globes of the Cilician winter aconite, each set in its frill of bright green bracts, were to be seen in their thousands in the scree. Often with them grew the richly marked *Crocus nubigena*, pale violet



A. J. Thornton



All Kodachromes by Oleg Polu

Ruwandiz is one of the most important of the Kurdish cities within the confines of modern Iraq. It is a natural fortress, surrounded by deep gorges on three sides. It stands astride an ancient caravan route across the Kurdish mountains, from Northern Persia to Erbil and Mosul, and in the past all merchandise was subjected to the control of the Sheiks of Ruwandiz. Today a modern road leads up to the town and continues eastwards to Persia, yet despite this the town remains little changed, with box-like houses, flat mud roofs, and all its people dressed in the jaunty Kurdish costume. American-style taxis and the record players blaring out in many of the cafés are the first symptoms of the change that is inevitable



Bulbs find suitable conditions for growth in both the foothills and the high mountains of the Near East. Particularly rich in species are the limestone hills bordering the heights. The hard limestone weathers down very slowly to a fertile, stiff red clay called *terra rossa*, which accumulates in pockets and ledges; *Tulipa systola* (above) is very much at home in these conditions. Further up, in the fir and cedar forests of the highest mountains, a quite different set of bulbs flower as soon as the snow melts in the spring. (Opposite, top) The winter aconite, *Eranthis cilicica*, and (opposite, bottom) *Crocus nubigena* are the first flowers to appear. Such bulbs are likely to grow well in cultivation provided that they have a good summer 'baking', and in our climate this must be produced artificially by suitable protection after fruiting





The Crown Imperial is the finest member of the genus *Fritillaria*, a genus which is widespread in North Temperate regions. It is found from Kurdistan to Kashmir and exemplifies the range of many plants of the Near East. It is a striking plant with an unpleasant 'foxy' smell and clear sparkling 'tear drops' on the inside of the bells at the base of each petal. Here it is growing on the open mountainside at 7000 feet, near the border between Iraq and Persia

in colour and deeply feathered with purple. A little further away, where the sun had already warmed up the soil, sprouted posies of the bright pink flowers of a miniature cyclamen. In sheltered places, often in the lee of large rocks, the Anatolian snowdrop, *Galanthus elwesii*, flowered sparingly with flowers almost twice the size of our own species—everything else was below ground with tight-set buds.

We continued our journey eastwards, past the delightful town of Alanya which straddles the top of a great promontory of rock. Further on lay the Cilician castle of Anamour, set down along the shores of the Mediterranean with the waves washing its massive walls and the wild hills piling up behind. The rough road wandered in and out of the steep valleys, sometimes dropping down to the sea and passing through groves of carefully tended bananas; at other times it climbed high into the hills, round exposed bluffs, with a changing view through the pine forests of wild uninhabited bays and blue sea a thousand feet or so below; while the shadowy form of Cyprus stretched across the horizon.

Often below the old road one caught glimpses of the concrete skeletons of new bridges where the road now runs. Before long this beautiful coastline strewn with the remains of Greek, Roman, Armenian and Turkish cities will be accessible to the ordinary tourist.

Beyond the Cilician Taurus mountains, in the north-eastern crook of the Mediterranean, lies the wide and fertile Cilician plain with its prosperous cities of Mersin, Tarsus and Adana. To the north lies the snowy Anti-Taurus range, and to the east the Amanus mountains. Owing to the proximity of the sea a striking climatic change occurs in the Amanus. In the place of dry pine forests and shrub-covered hillsides, which are the rule in southern Turkey, are to be found rich beech forests, similar in many ways to those of the Black Sea coast and the Caucasus. But, due no doubt to the isolation of the Amanus

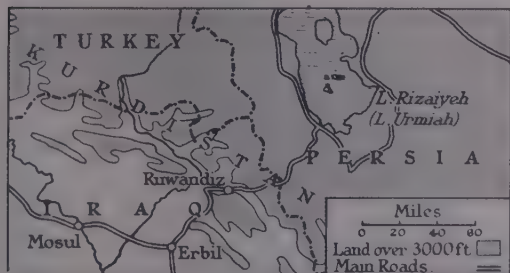


This strange bee orchid has a brown hairy lip which looks exactly like a bumble bee. At first glance it appears that a bee is sucking nectar from the flower

forests, there are a number of plants which grow only in these mountains. A species of cyclamen, *C. pseudibericum*, is a case in point. It was known as a very rare plant in cultivation but no-one knew where it had come from. Quite recently it was discovered growing wild in the Amanus. I made a journey expressly to search for it.

Early one morning I set out with a guide and ponies to climb towards a snow-covered peak, Dumanli Dag. The track led up first through thickets of hazel and oak and then into the beech forests. Snow still lay on the forest floor but it had melted in the meadows. By the side of rills on grassy banks there was flowering (to my surprise) the common primrose; probably at the most eastern point of its range. The familiar green shoots of the Dog's Mercury pushed through the beech leaves and a hellebore reminiscent of our Stinking hellebore grew along the wood verges; this and a species of snowdrop are both endemic to this region.

After a while I found the cyclamen I was anxious to see. It had drooping ruby buds and dark green marbled leaves, and when the petals turned back the rose-pink flowers had a deep



A. J. Thornton

purple patch at the base. The corms of this plant were loosely embedded in the leaf-mould and were easy to collect; I gathered, I hope, a sufficient quantity to get the plant well established in English rock gardens.

Whilst collecting these cyclamen I was disturbed by a continuous rustling amongst the dry leaves. Imagine my surprise when I suddenly caught sight of a tortoise as it emerged from its winter hibernation. I would never have suspected that tortoises, snowdrops and cyclamen could live together in the same habitat.

Further east, in the mountains of Kurdistan, the climate is more continental. Bulbs are still numerous but they are related to species found in Persia and the Caucasus rather than the Mediterranean. Snowdrops, cyclamen and narcissi cannot tolerate the dryer climate, and instead irises, tulips and crocuses become more numerous.

The best starting-place for a journey into Iraqi Kurdistan is from the ancient city of Erbil. From here a modern road cuts through the heart of Kurdistan to Persia. Taxis are cheap, fast and comfortable and in a few hours one can travel from the Mesopotamian plain, through the Kurdish stronghold of Ruwandiz, to the high

mountains and the melting snows once more. At Haji Omran, the last Iraqi village before the Persian border, one can choose between an up-to-date rest house and the smoky *chaikana* for one's lodging. The latter I found more interesting. The fare is simple: flat 'cartwheels' of unleavened bread straight from the earth oven and bowls of fresh sour milk are the staple diet of the country. We sat about on rickety chairs drinking interminable cups of tea while all round sat fierce-looking Kurds with bright turbans and cummerbunds, incessantly clicking backgammon counters. Above the chatter of voices rose the wild songs of some itinerant musician, who during his stay at the *chaikana* had recorded his voice on the café tape-recorder.

In mid-April the alpine meadows about Haji Omran are still soggy with melting snows from higher up the mountains. Bulbs are everywhere. The winter aconites and pale violet-flowered crocuses are over, but in their place the meadows are often flushed with deep blue grape-hyacinths. Mahogany-coloured fritillaries grow through the young corn, which despite a long winter under snow is a vivid spring green. Pale pink autumn-crocuses and sky-blue scillas grow in the damper patches.

Iris bakeriana is perhaps the most delicate of reticulate irises; it flowers in high Kurdistan





Dr Peter Davis, the author's companion. He has made a number of important botanical journeys discovering many new species. His large collections will form the basis of a flora of Turkey

From the snow-covered mountain summits long fingers of snow stretched down the valley sides on the north-facing slopes, but on the sunny side the snow had already melted, leaving long stony ridges. As we followed these up, more and more kinds of bulbs were flowering. To my utter astonishment I found the largest of the fritillaries, the majestic Crown Imperial, in full flower high up on one of these slopes. It is a well-known garden plant and one of the first to be brought into cultivation from the Near East. One does not expect to see the robust three-foot stems and tan-coloured flowers standing head and shoulders above all else, exposed to the bitter winds and frost that may occur. Not far off, in the screes, was another of the same clan which could barely carry its single large bell an inch or more above the stones—cringing, it seemed, against the elements. The botanist must be confident of his knowledge to relate these two species to the same genus.

It was, however, the irises that gave the greatest pleasure. There are two very different species flowering on the high ridges. The extraordinary fragility and translucence of the flowers as they simply burst from among the barren-looking stones as soon as the sun gives warmth

is a sight that I shall long remember. Their brilliance is made more striking by the wild setting of rock, snow and mountains, and it is little wonder that some of these plants look so out of place and unreal in our gardens. The first, *Iris bakeriana*, is a Persian species, related to our 'reticulata' iris. It flowers very early and has delicate, scented violet flowers, spotted with purple and with a deep purple lip and orange crest; only later do the spiky leaves push through the stones. The other plant, *I. caucasica*, is larger and more showy. It has a mass of pale yellow flowers, close to the ground, which shine marvellously in the bright mountain sun; broad outwardly curving leaves with striking white margins complete this lovely plant.

Although the cream of the wild bulbous plants has undoubtedly been skimmed from the mountains of the Near East, there are still others to be found in remote places. But more important, perhaps, is that species that have proved to be intractable in the past should be reintroduced into England from time to time in the hope that strains may be found which will settle down in our climate.

The more early-flowering spring bulbs we have in our gardens the better.

The Gardens of Rome

by

ELIZABETH BOWEN



Elizabeth Bowen found one Roman pleasure in its gardens. These extracts are from *A Time in Rome*, which Longmans are to publish next month. To illustrate them we are reproducing some of the splendid photographs from *Gardens of Rome*, the latest book in the beautifully illustrated *Beaux Pays* series, which is to be published this month by Nicholas Kaye

THE gates in the Wall of Rome, though much extends beyond them, are important. Almost all traffic must pass through one or another. Ancient-Roman in origin, the gates have, most of them, undergone change of name—through several of them saints walked to their martyrdom; one continues to honour its papal donor, two serve to christen the quarters in which they stand. They are: *Popolo*, formerly Flaminia; *Pinciana*; *Pia*, formerly Nomentana; *San Lorenzo*, formerly Tiburtina; *Maggiore*, formerly Praenestina; *San Giovanni*, near-by the site of the vanished Porta Asinaria; *Metronia*; *Latina*; *San Sebastiano*, formerly Appia; *Ardeatina*, now no more than a name and a gap for traffic; *San Paolo*, formerly Ostiensis. These all are south of the Tiber. Across the Tiber, gates are fewer and play less part: the three to be noted are *Portese*, *San Pancrazio*, formerly Aurelia, and *Cavalleggeri*.

Strictly, the gates are gateways; they consist of double, triple or multiple arches. Built or re-architectured at different epochs, they vary accordingly in character: the earlier are fortified by towers, the later glorified by façades. Each creates round itself its own kind of neighbourhood. But the dominant is the Aurelian Wall, which the gates no more than punctuate and diversify—once having found the Wall I could not forget it, or be unaware of its continuity. Its re-emergences into view, out of covering buildings, are for ever dramatic; whether in view or not it is *there*, and shapes one's sense of the city. Once wholly within the Wall, in essence Rome is contained still.

This particular psychic concentration is not a matter of architectural bulk—extra-mural Rome is, as a matter of fact, not only larger in acreage than the inner city but more heavily built up. The Wall encloses much that is not urban: grassiness,

public and private gardens, tree-shaded domains that could be woods. It is outside, often, that the out-and-out urbanism begins—all the same, with unboundedness goes a sort of dilution: the air seems thinner. Modernity cannot always account for this; the Wall by no means is a dividing line between old and new, or older and newer—internal Rome blazes into the 20th century; external Rome has faded, lingering patches. No, but for all that the Wall seals in the Rome we recognize as 'eternal'—so much so that surfaces, sounds and smells differ, according to whether one is outside or in. Led blindfold, I swear, I could still tell whether or not I had passed through one of the gates.

The Aurelian Wall is an aid to Roman geography: sights or objects of which one is in search should be related (when one studies the map) to one or another point in its circumference. There is a satisfaction in walking under it—I cannot in words convey its *effect* of height (many things must be higher in reality) or its varying flushes of colour, rose-cornelian. Substantiality is in itself a beauty. To brush up against the Wall, or to press one's hand against any part of its surface, is a pleasure. On, on goes the ripple of angles, the buttresses in somnolent repetition—guard towers, stairways, arcaded sentry-walks wait, hollow, idle, endless, to be explored. The San Sebastiano gateway and a section adjoining are on view to sightseers, but I did not ring the custodian's bell—elsewhere one may scale about unofficially, unhindered.

The Wall south of the Tiber describes a loop, outward from the river. Its course, which zigzags hardly less than the river's, begins by the Porta del Popolo, ends just short of the Ponte d'Industria; the thing is like a many-jointed screen, here and there folded into outstanding angles. North of the Tiber, the Wall resumes, *not* opposite where it left off, but three bridges upstream: from the Porta Portese its greek-key pattern mounts to Porta San Pancrazio on the

(*Opposite*) The gardens of the Priory of Malta. They were redesigned in the 18th century by Piranesi





(Opposite) The Forum, the heart of imperial Rome: the Via Sacra and the Arch of Titus. (Left) A statue in the Renaissance garden of the Villa Aldobrandini, in the middle of Rome. (Below) The fountain of the Navicella, with the Villa Celimontana beyond (now the headquarters of the Italian Geographical Society)



Janiculum. Junction is made with a later, papal wall, which takes in the Vatican and St Peter's; fortification, on this side ends with the envelope of Castel San Angelo. Rome across the bridges gives the effect of being more loosely put than the main city.

To attempt to follow the Wall the whole way round is ambitious: it may be, one loves it the more if one never does. A pleasant stretch of the outer flank, to sample, is from Porta Metrona, along past the Latina and San Sebastiano gates to the Ardeatina traffic-gap: the road is tree-shaded, leisurely and suburban: there are lawns with benches between the buttresses. Inside, for the corresponding length, are tiny private gardens, and market gardens—the latter one may enter and wander in, at risk of being chased by a fierce dog. The busy proprietors of the gardens merely gaze, too civil to say one nay: they need not, that is done by their dogs. Here, the arches of the Wall's inner ground-level gallery are in use as potting sheds, stacked with rakes or wired in to contain poultry. A vine trained over an arbour, a lemon tree fruiting beside a cistern among cracked terra cotta shards remind one that one is, after all, in Italy. Rising from among artichokes and lettuces, particularly in the water-colour light of an early evening, the Wall has the primitive reddish look of a cliff.

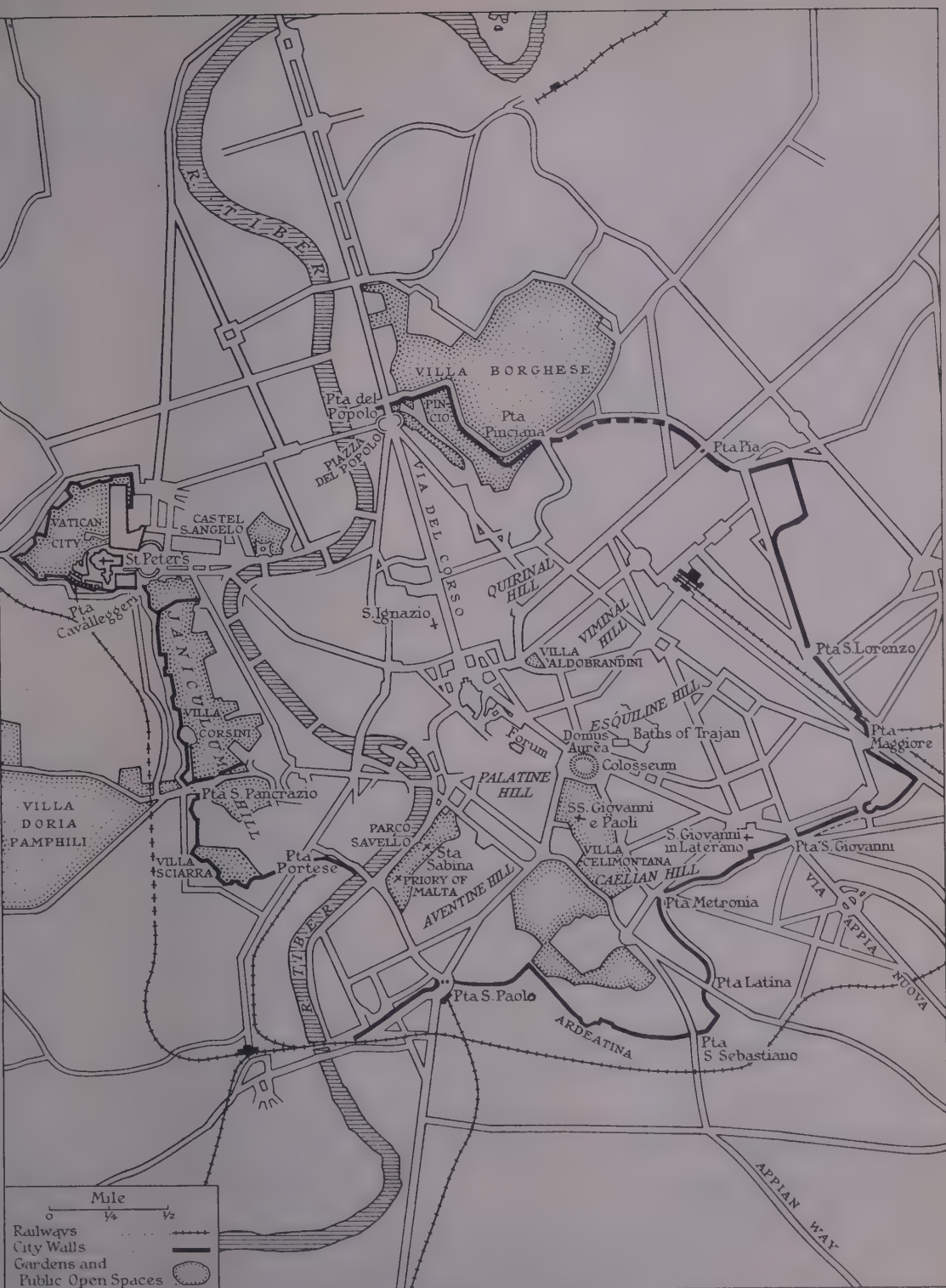
Pleasures and palaces... One or another desire or curiosity shaped my courses for runs of days. The pursuit through Rome of one artist, such as Bernini, or tracking down the vestiges of some epoch, or search for the answer to some enigma exciting or troubling to my mind, but not, it seemed, to anyone else's—anything of that sort could be enough to keep me zigzagging about the city, not so much at random as might appear. What meant little yesterday could be a clue today. A hunt, with the disregard for everything else that it sets up, is itself pleasure. Nor does one know where one may not be landed up—I got to know Rome as a hunter gets to know country. Equally, there were moods, which I gave way to. A relationship cannot stand still: there are phases and developments and it may be setbacks in one's having to do with a place, particularly if it be Rome. As for going about, I know I do not care for being conducted, for more than a few steps or a few minutes, however well. Nothing, that is to say no-one, can be such an inexorable tour-conductor as one's own conscience or sense of duty, if one allows either

the upper hand: the self-bullying that goes on in the name of sightseeing is grievous. Fatigue, rebellious distaste due to satiation, may ruin Rome for you—should you lay Rome in ruins over again? Enjoy yourself, I say—having in mind that there is always the matter of learning how to. This is not even my footnote to your guide-book: it is my scribbles on the margins of mine. I claim to be little help to anyone else.

It seemed to me hopeless to make a methodical round of all Rome's churches. I admired many simply for their façades: I entered, and very often, the same few, and those less on account of the merits for which they might be starred than because they drew me. Some meant journeys, others grew dear through familiarity from being in parts of Rome where I often found myself.

Many Baroque façades tend to run into one in my memory—wrongly, for no two are really alike. Sant' Ignazio (just off the Corso) I would not fail to identify, for this reason: the tiny *piazza* it commands is architected in elegant unity with the church's frontage: here is Rome's most perfect little outdoor 'drawing-room' in which, at a restaurant table under an awning, one may while away hours of noon or evening. In the main, my liking was wedded to what is simple. In much of Rome one is hampered, in the taking-in of effect, by crowdedness; seldom is one seeing from far away. How immense the gain may be if one can and does, how enhanced may be noble theatricality, is shown by San Giovanni in Laterano—which launches its statue-topped *perice* into the air from the head of ascent after ascent of lawns and steps; visible for miles, this is one of Rome's dominant silhouettes.

One Roman pleasure, I found, is the holiday from Rome to be had in gardens. Apart from the Pincian and the Borghese, many are open to you and me—public. Private they formerly were, and they still seem so. Ownership now goes to whoever loves them. Nothing is stone in them but the benches, the fountain-bases, the statues mysteriously located in glades, by grottoes, or at the turns of leafy serpentine walks. Your few living companions are in worlds of their own—lovers, fingertips touching, pause by the pools seriously to contemplate their reflections, as though being photographed; old people sit in dignity in the sun; infants totter and children play with an absorption which keeps them all but silent. Inkly are the caverns of ilex shadow: wire-tunnels are clambered over by ivy. The flower-





beds may be sparser than they were, or the lawns more worn, but a privileged tranquillity is everywhere—sometimes a path is the way to a small viewpoint balustrade with a large outlook, come upon by nobody else. Such a garden is that of the Villa Celimontana, on the Caelian—the main gate is next-door to Santa Maria in Domnica. Celimontana, now, is the headquarters of the Italian Geographical Society, who have put the villa itself to some learned use, maintain the surroundings, and are your hosts. The gardens extend some way down the hillside; through them you can make a short-cut from the Navicella to SS. Giovanni e Paolo, escaping nudges from motor cars on the road proper, though thereby, also, missing the rose-red Arco di Dolabella. Corresponding enchantment, across Rome, is to be found in the Villa Sciarra (or Wurts) gardens, halfway up the Janiculum: among bowers of camellia and oleander are lively aviaries. Further along the Janiculum, where the hill rises steeply behind the Palazzo Corsini (now a gallery), are the Botanical Gardens—large, unkempt for the greater part, lush with forgotten overgrown specimens, here and there swampy with errant waterways. Scale the mossy terraces, and the crumbling staircases in which some steps are beginning to wobble—whether these gardens are ‘open’ remains ambiguous; I only know that nobody turned me out, and that they provided a consolation for my failure to enter (it seems that this *is* impossible) the near-by Orti which were Queen Christina of Sweden’s famed academic groves. High upon the Capitoline are the garden-plots which replace the vanished Temple of Jupiter and, still better, the fronded enclosures or bright parterres within and around the Palazzo dei Conservatori—to reach those, you must buy your way through the museum. What many people remember about the Aventine is the magnificent, iron-plated locked gate through whose keyhole you obtain the keyhole-shaped, minute view of St Peter’s. But elsewhere the hill is more generous: alongside Santa Sabina is the gladelike Parco Savello, garden in feeling, with nothing beyond its parapet but sky. I associate the Savello with singing birds, the columnar lines of the slender trees, and reposefulness—here in so green a space, at so great a height, above Rome. In the

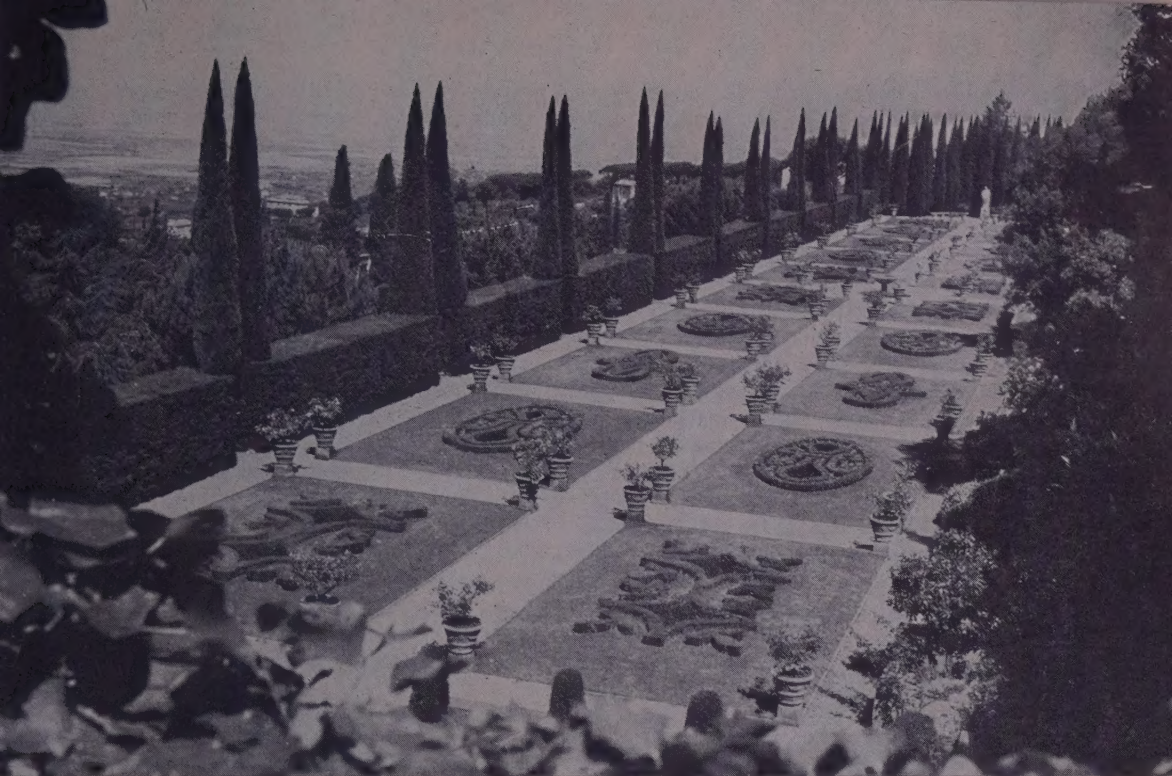
south of the city, near the Aurelian Wall, between the sedate walled streets headed respectively for the Latina and San Sebastiano gates, is a garden-park containing a columbarium. The only accessible gardens I did not care for are those known as the Oppio, which, on the Esquiline, facing the Colosseum, overlies Nero’s Golden House—these *have* a ‘municipal’ air; the gravel is dusty and the flowers are garish, the meandering little fences are archly rustic, and the bald scene has as its only features, apart from the remains of the Baths of Trajan, brick-work cages, each heading a shaft through which light is filtered into the halls below.

The proper, more sounding name of the Golden House is the Domus Aurea. Today, you enter it, through the horrible little forefront of rustication, as you might a cave-dwelling—once, remember, the sunstruck glitter of its roofs was a magnet to ships coming up the Tiber. The Domus Aurea, one must also grasp, was but in part a dwelling; it was a domain, a project, a Versailles-like conception of holding court. To envisage its size and its stretching opulence, its knitting of the Esquiline with the Palatine by a system of gardens, corridors, porticos and subsidiary ornamental buildings, many reflected into the lake in the hollow where now is the Colosseum, needs an act of faith—so completely has everything been expunged. Moreover, nothing within miles of being so beautiful, if only where beauty is in effrontery, supplanted it—with the speculative exception of the now all but equally vanished temple of Rome and Venus. I query, were its successors morally better? Titus’s Arch vaunts the reduction to dust of Jerusalem by *force majeure*; disgusting popular spectacles in the Colosseum must have degraded and brutalized far more people than did the vices, by nature fairly exclusive, whose jewelled settings had guarded doors, or the languors in scented arbours sunk deep in groves.

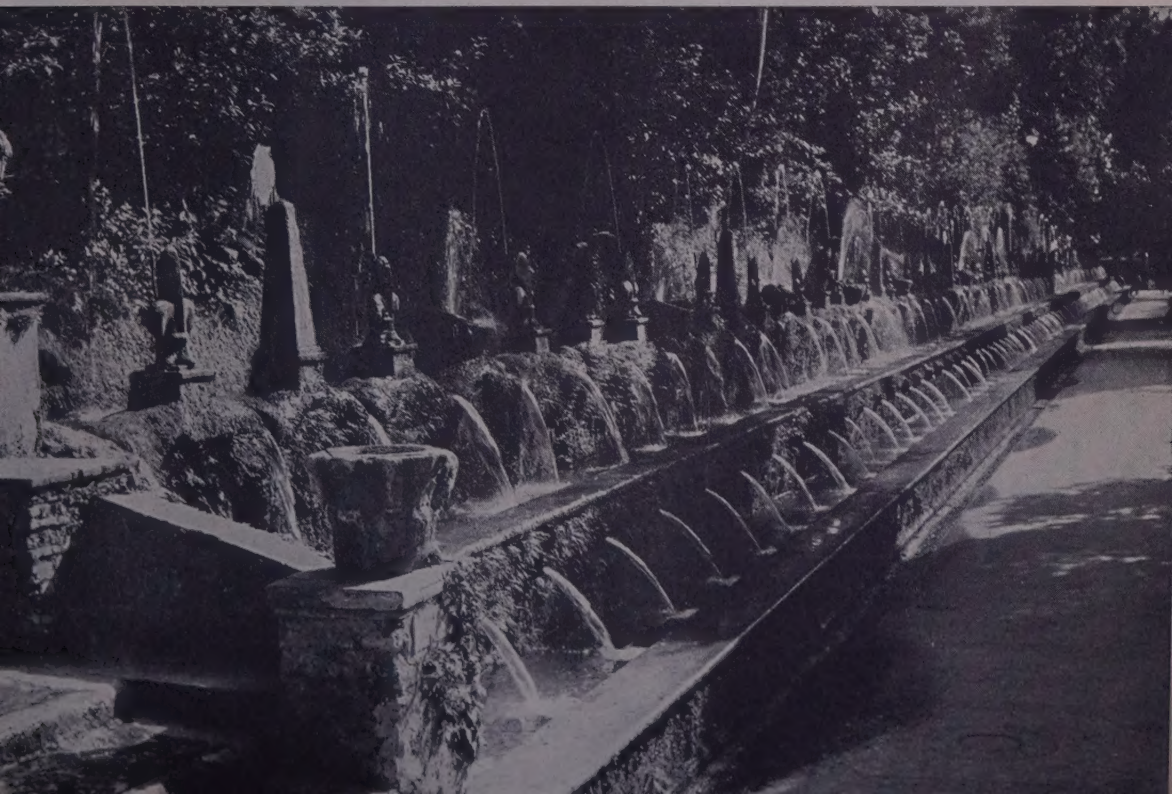
Rome holds in its keeping more than one masterpiece of illusion. Loveliest of those which remain intact is the Empress Livia’s painted garden, an additional wonder of the world. A flower-fringed wood, with vague hills undulating behind, this first encompassed an oblong room in Livia’s country villa at Prima Porta: not long ago the sylvan scene was transferred to the walls of a room of the same proportions, built for it in the Museo Nazionale. Neighbouring in the museum by the modish *domus* decorations we

(*Opposite*) The 17th-century parterres of the Villa Doria-Pamphili. The formal gardens are surrounded by an enormous park landscaped in the 18th century





(Opposite) The fountain of the sea-horses in the Borghese Gardens, Rome's principal public park.
(Above) The terraces of the Villa Barberini, Castel Gandolfo, fifteen miles south-east of Rome.
(Below) The Hundred Fountains: among the many in the gardens of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli



once spoke of, this blue-green eternity of Livia's should be visited on a different, less banal day—one does not merely look at it, one becomes enclosed in it. In these young woods, diaphanous, not more dense than thickets, everything is ardent and fresh-growing, yet drenched as by dew with all time's mystery. Branches and the air between them are alive with birds, and wild doves and finches and others have taken courage and perched on the trellis, nearer the eye. Gaps in the trellis give on a strip of greensward between it and the parapet—which, though it runs all the way round, keeping back the wood, never is monotonous, for its tracery-patterns change and it has embrasures. The one tree framed within each embrasure is, you will note, of a species rarer (that is, in Italy) than are those mingling together in the wood. Near an exotic pine a rabbit has got in, as rabbits do. The apples and oranges ripening are few as yet, though enough to weigh down the still-slender boughs; the flowers grow, also, not in too great or anonymous profusion—there is a touch of identity to each as it rests on the bush, leans from the spray or springs from the stem. The wood recedes, as in life, into veils of atmosphere: everything in the forefront is in stereoscopic closeness to you—the veining of leaves, corollas' uneven or dinted petals, the moulded, tipped and directed feathers composing the characteristic plumage of each bird. Elsewhere, only in poetry could there be such verisimilitude. There is not a breeze, but the greenery has a look of not perfect stillness: animate, it must breathe.

It is impossible, in spring, to walk too often on the Appian Way, under the cumulus piling into the blue. Spaced out along the wayside, the domestic-looking tombs and crumbling angles of former towers might seem, if often enough you pass them, to be keeping a look out for you. Company is something, for this is like walking on a causeway across a lake of emptiness extending on each side—the Campagna is *not* empty; why should it feel so? The farther out you go, the fewer the cypresses and the flat-topped pines. For stretches the road is treeless. Each tree serves to encourage the walker onward, as would a mile-stone—first sighted ahead, then gained, then left behind: were it not for that, one might doubt whether anything so little as one's step was making any effect on the great distance. Of the skeletal, enduring old Roman villas you from time to time leave the road to

explore, that of the Quintilii—two noble brothers murdered by a covetous enemy—is the most nearly complete and the most romantic. Ahead, a mirage of colour dissolved into air, or air into colour, is apt to tempt you out further than you know, till suddenly, less tired than dizzy, you have to drop onto grass verge; where you remain, plucking vaguely at the trefoil, not even thinking. If you wake from the daze to find it is late—'too late', that is—you sprint across to the Via Appia Nuova, along which glide speedy electric train-trams, stopping at concrete platforms. If in no hurry, ease yourself back onto your feet (which, if you have sense, on a day like this will be clad not in heavy 'stout' shoes but the supple Roman kind: in those you have the easy sensation of walking barefoot, but for not fearing to stub your toes) and retrace your way to near Cecilia Metalla, where, by now, pretty suburban ladies dressed for an evening in town are likely to be waiting. Then, home into Rome on the bus in the dusk.

My last Sunday was very blue all day, very hot all night. The yellow of evening brightened on the upper parapets of the Pincio, making the dusk in the Piazza del Popolo below by contrast bluer and, though watery-clear, mysterious. Above, many-coloured balloons afire with sun could be seen trailing against the sky, and a band was playing—loudly enough for those who preferred to circulate down in the piazza to be able to do so, also, to music. As shadow travelled up the face of the Pincio, I also climbed the ramps and staircases to the festive terrace, to continue moving restlessly about. By now I was anxious to be gone, so as to have going away over. Crossing the gravel to an empty table, I sat down, soon to find myself drinking something I had never drunk, a glassful of some sort of coloured syrup. The waiter had misunderstood my order. Dust from the trodden gravel was filling the summery, tired air: as evening deepened, ilexes ran together ahead of it into the ink of midnight. Lovers wandered away from parties, deeper into the glades to await darkness, in which, when it came, their presences would be felt in the zones between lamps wakening in branches. I walked to the bridge spanning the deep gulch on one side of the Aurelian Wall, between the Pincio and Borghese gardens, and looked over. Under me passed cars returning to Rome, people with elbows out of the open windows in what was already an August languor.